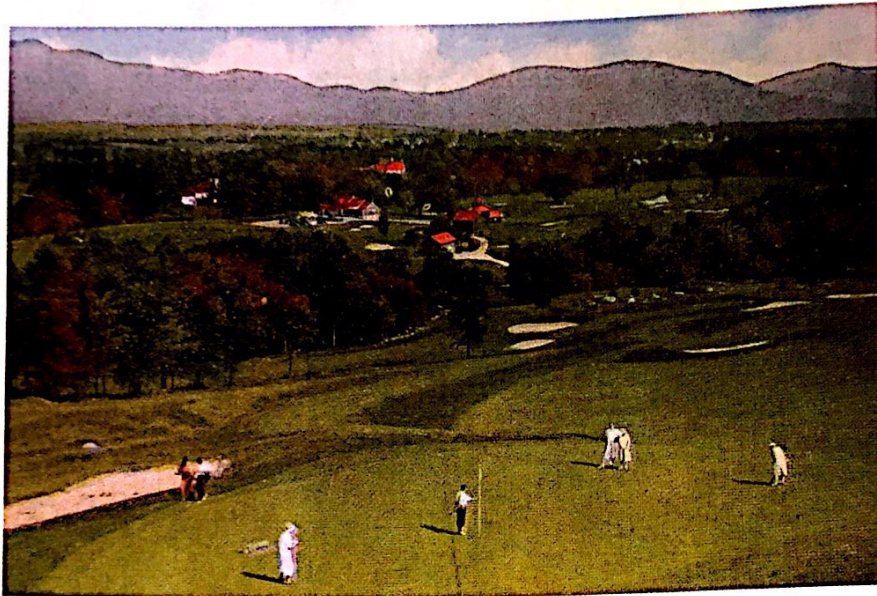


Venerable Site

Rutland Country Club got off to a fast start
in 1897 and is still going strong

BY WILLIAM NOBLE



An old look at the scenic view from the 16th green at Rutland Country Club.

The year was 2001, and the Rutland Country Club course was 100 years old. On a warm weekend, members of the semi-private club had been invited to play the original nine holes, as designed in 1901. "We set up a commemorative tournament," says Bob Carroll, who, along with Jim Tinney, wrote the club's centennial history. "We traced the original nine holes from drawings, and we even printed a commemorative scorecard."

That scorecard presented a course of 2,919 yards, with a par of 36. And because this was 1901 re-created, the scorecard had a column for "bogey" of 42, a highly satisfying score to golfers of a century ago who used wooden shafted clubs, gutta percha golf balls, and thin-bladed irons.

In truth, 2001 was not the centennial of Rutland Country Club, only the commemorative for its current location along Grove Street. Four years earlier, in 1897, interest in the game of golf was sweeping across the eastern United States. In Rutland, a group of local business-

Rutland Country Club

yards	6,134
green fees	\$48-\$91
phone	802/773-3254
location	Rutland

www.rutlandcountryclub.com

men bought a small wooded parcel along Clement Road where they devised a three-hole layout and offered memberships. They realized they were on to something when about 300 people showed up for the opening.

Within a couple of years it was obvious that interest in the game was bursting (the first tournament was a putting contest with 46 entries), so a dozen of

the founders purchased the nearby Baxter Farm, its 380 acres and buildings, and thereby put the Rutland Country Club on the site it occupies to this date.

For the next 88 years the Baxter farmhouse, a rambling structure with a wraparound porch and breezy piazzas, would serve as the clubhouse. The founders also hired George Low, one of the many ex-patriot Scotsmen then in America, to design a new golf course. That Low's vision worked is underscored by a travel guide of the time, which said the golf course "is considered by professional golfers to be exceptionally good. Opinion is unanimous in ranking it as one of the best nine-hole courses in the United States."

Simultaneously, Rutland Country Club became a charter member of the Vermont Golf Association, and a couple of years later joined the fledgling United States Golf Association which had been organized less than a decade before.

As the first third of the 20th century moved along, the club attracted some heavyweight visitors: President Woodrow Wilson came by (though there's no record he played), and only a couple of years later, then-Vice President Calvin Coolidge signed the visitors book, as did his wife and son. In 1928 the club hired Scotsman Jim Murray as resident professional and provided him a house just a nine-iron away from the clubhouse. Within a few months Walter Hagen had come to play an exhibition match with Murray and large crowds followed them around the course.

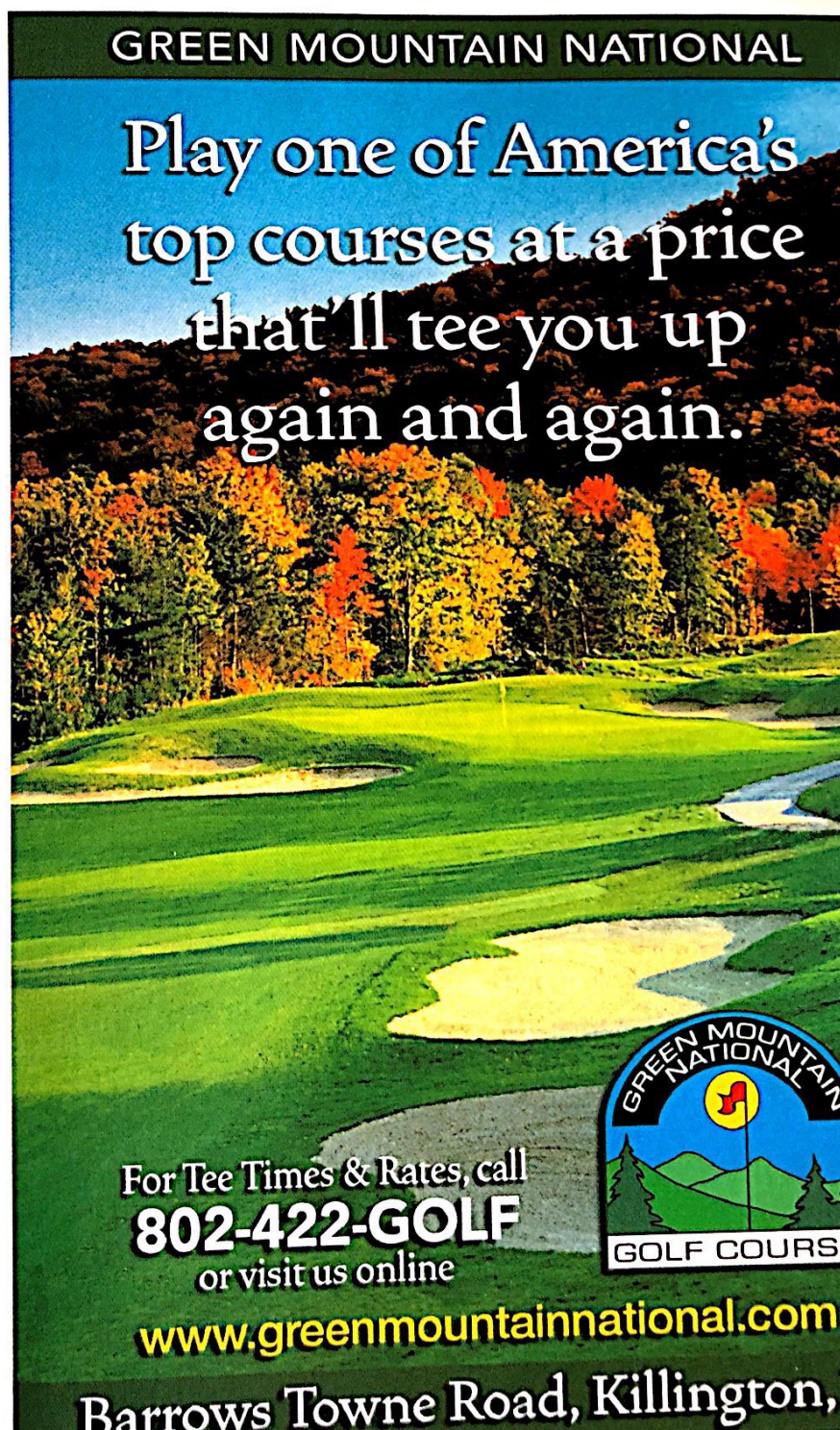
The year Murray took over was also the year a second nine was added, using Boston architect Wayne Stiles for most of the design. He also made some changes to the routing of the existing nine, creating the 18 holes that exist today. Murray was head professional for 28 years, nurturing local players such as his daughter, Mae Murray Jones, who won the Vermont Amateur six times and was runner-up for the U.S. Women's Amateur in 1950, and Tom Pierce, who won the Vermont Amateur seven times.

The fifties, sixties, and seventies were good at Rutland. The annual L.D. Pierce Invitational, named for Leslie Pierce, who had helped to guide the Club through the Depression and World War II, attracted fine players from across New England. Several club players, men and women, won the Vermont Amateur, some more than once. South African professional Bobby Locke married a local girl, spent a good bit of time in the area, and set the course record of 62 in 1958, a mark that still stands and wasn't equaled until last summer. Several major regional championships, including the New England Women's

Amateur and the New England Junior, were played at the course.

By the 1980s, a new clubhouse became a pressing need. So, on a spring day in 1989, a modern, sleekly fashionable building opened on the site of the old Baxter farmhouse. The club did not forget its past, though. A lighted gallery of RCC memories greets the visitor in the clubhouse: silver cups and trophies, visitor's logs and old scorecards, restored photos and plaques, all attesting to a rich golf life that began at the end of the 19th century and continues unabated to this day. ■

William Noble is Contributing Editor for Vermont Golf.



GREEN MOUNTAIN NATIONAL

**Play one of America's
top courses at a price
that'll tee you up
again and again.**

For Tee Times & Rates, call
802-422-GOLF
or visit us online
www.greenmountainnational.com

Barrows Towne Road, Killington,

